

agenda. Creating the right environment for negotiations had as its focus the issue of ensuring that Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation was functioning at 100 percent, and that Palestinians were exerting 100 percent effort to take effective unilateral steps against terror. That's why our ideas on security create a structure to ensure that the fight against terror will not be episodic, but that it endures.

From the beginning, we have made the security issue the center of our dialogue with the Palestinians. We have pressed them to understand that the fight against terror is a basic Palestinian interest. And what we have seen, especially over the past several months, is a concerted Palestinian effort—even in the absence of an agreement with Israel on the four-part agenda—against those who would threaten peace with terror and violence. The Palestinian Authority deserves credit for taking on such groups, but it is essential as they do that others in the region who tell us they support peace refrain from greeting with cordial hospitality and financial backing the enemies of peace.

Our suggestions for Israeli redeployments were also formulated with Israel's prerogatives and concerns in mind. We recognize, as reflected in the Christopher letter, that further redeployment is an Israeli responsibility under Oslo, rather than an issue to be negotiated. But it is in the nature of partnership that Israel should take Palestinian concerns into account, while following the terms of its agreement. Otherwise, the peace process cannot move forward.

In presenting our ideas, we did not define the areas from which Israel should redeploy. Our ideas placed a premium on Israel retaining overall security responsibility in the areas affected by the proposed redeployment. And our suggestion about the size of the next redeployment came down far closer to Israel's position than to that of the Palestinians.

Why did we suggest a size? Because that is the only way to reach the agreement on launching permanent status talks that Prime Minister Netanyahu asked us to achieve. In presenting and discussing our ideas, we have acted with discretion and patience. Because we realize the difficulty of the decisions the parties were being asked to make, we have gone the extra mile—in fact, the extra 20,000 miles, back and forth across the Atlantic many times. And we have done so without complaint, because America will always go the extra mile for peace.

I want to mention at this point also that America's commitment to peace and security in the Middle East has historically been a bipartisan commitment, stretching from the administrations of Truman and Eisenhower to Bush and Clinton. Because that commitment involves the security of a cherished ally and the vital strategic interests of the United States, our leaders have historically stood together in support of Israel, and shoulder to shoulder with our Arab friends in pursuit of peace. If America is to play its proper role in promoting stability in the Middle East, it is imperative that our leaders now—in the Executive Branch, in Congress, and within the Jewish-American and Arab-American communities—continue to work together on behalf of shared goals.

Tomorrow, I will meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu again, and I very much look forward to the meeting. We are working hard to overcome differences and I hope we will be able to make progress.

But the key point that I have been emphasizing to both Israeli and Palestinian leaders is that although America remains committed to the pursuit of peace, it is up to them—not to us—whether peace is achieved.

Over the past months, we have played the role of mediator, counselor, friend, shuttler,

cajoler and idea-maker. We have responded whenever called at literally any time of the day or night. We have done this because we care about Israel and its people; and we care about the Palestinians and Arabs; and we care about the future peace and stability of the region.

We are not giving any ultimatums, and we're not threatening any country's security. We are not trying to make any party suffer at the expense of another. All we are trying to do is find the path to peace, as the parties have repeatedly urged us to do. And what we have especially been trying to do in recent weeks is to issue a wake-up call. The leaders of the region have reached a crossroads. Act before it is too late. Decide before the peace process collapses. And understand that in a neighborhood as tough as the Middle East, there is no security from hard choices, and no lasting security without hard choices.

The parties must understand, as well, that there is urgency to this task. For time is no longer an ally of this process; it has become an adversary. The historic accomplishments that flowed from the Oslo process represented a strategic opportunity for peace that is now being put at risk. Consider that just two years ago, at Sharm al-Sheikh, representatives from Israel and a host of Arab states gathered at the Summit of the Peace-makers to say no to terror and yes to peace. They saw Israel as a partner. Unfortunately, that exhilarating sense of partnership has been lost.

Second, the very idea that negotiations can peacefully resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict is now under threat. Unless the leaders are willing to make hard choices, the field will be left to extremists who have no interest in peace.

Third, the clock continues to tick. The interim period under Oslo concludes on May 4, 1999—less than a year from now. Those who believe that drifting is acceptable, or who believe they can declare unilateral positions or take unilateral acts when the interim period ends, are courting disaster. Both sides must understand that the issues reserved for permanent status discussions—including the status of the West Bank and Gaza and of settlements—can only be settled by negotiation. That was the spirit and logic of Oslo.

America's interest and goal is a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, including the principle of land for peace. That will require decisive progress on all tracks, including the Israel-Lebanon track and the Israel-Syria track.

We are not a party to the negotiations. As President Clinton has repeatedly emphasized, it is not our right, nor our intention, nor is it within our capacity, to dictate terms or impose a settlement. At the same time, our credibility and interests are indeed affected by what the Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs do or fail to do. We are prepared to support their efforts as long as we judge they are serious about wanting to reach an agreement—and serious enough to make the decisions necessary to achieve it.

For too long, too many children in too many parts of the Middle East have grown up amidst violence, deprivation and fear. Too many lives have been cut short by the terrorist's bomb, the enemy's shell and the assassin's bullet. Too many opportunities have been lost to heal old wounds, narrow differences and transform destructive conflict into constructive cooperation.

Everyone with a stake in the Middle East has an obligation to do what can be done to seize the strategic opportunity for peace that now exists, and thereby to make possible a future of stability and prosperity for all the people of the region.

The United States believes this kind of future is within our grasp. But the peoples of the region will not realize that future if their leaders do not reach out with a vision as great as the goal to overcome past grievances, treat neighbors as partners and undertake in good faith the hard work of cooperation and peace. All that is required is for each to accord dignity and accept responsibility, and to act not out of passion and fear, but out of reason and hope.

For the peoples of the region who have suffered too long, the path out of the wilderness is uphill, but clearly marked. The time has come now, before the dusk obscures the guideposts, to move up that road; and by so doing, to answer the too-long denied prayers of the children—all the children—of the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

HONORING FARMINGTON HILLS HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL AND THEIR MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to your attention the achievements of the Harrison High School football team in Farmington Hills, Michigan. The Harrison High School football team, with a 46–8 record in 16 playoff appearances and eight state titles under their belts, are true champions in every sense of the word. Most recently, the Hawks added the 1997 Class “A” State Championship to their long list of accomplishments. In addition to their athletic prowess, the team also holds the eighth highest grade point average in the state with a 3.67 average GPA. Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating these talented young athletes, Jory Hannan of the football program, and the many others who were an integral part of the Hawk's tremendous success.

A “POINT-OF-LIGHT” FOR ALL AMERICANS: DR. BETTY SHABAZZ

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 1998

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in celebration of the renaming of the Glenmore School in Brooklyn, New York to the “Dr. Betty Shabazz Elementary and Preparatory School.” Dr. Betty Shabazz stands as a model of what the students of Glenmore School must strive to become—an individual with strength, resilience and perseverance in overcoming life's greatest challenges. Dr. Betty Shabazz is a great “POINT-OF-LIGHT” whose legacy will live on forever and will positively influence many more generations to come.

On Monday, June 23, 1997, a great presence in the lives of countless citizens of the world departed this earth. Dr. Betty Shabazz was not just an inspiration to the African-American community, an advocate of equality for women and a proponent of children's rights. She was an inspiration to the human community; she was an advocate of equality for all people and she was an incarnation of